

California Ag Coalition for Fair and Free Trade

Coalition Members

June 21, 2005

Alliance of Western Milk Producers

Blue Diamond Growers

California Apple Commission

California Association of Wheat Growers

California Cattlemen's Association

California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations

California Farm Bureau Federation

California Fig Advisory Board

California Grape & Tree Fruit League

California League of Food Processors

California Pear Growers Association

California Poultry Federation

California Rice Commission

California Table Grape Commission

Diamond of California

Dried Fruit Association

Sunkist Growers

Sun-Maid Growers of California

Sun World International, LLC

Western Growers Association

Western United Dairymen

The Honorable(All California Representatives)
United States House of Representatives
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

As representatives of producers of California's key agricultural and food products, we are writing to request your strong support for the U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). California produces 350 different agricultural commodities and is the largest agricultural exporting state in the nation. With this agreement California agriculture will gain more export opportunities and will level the playing field on which we compete.

This agreement creates more balanced trade between the US, Dominican Republic and Central American countries. Central American countries already benefit from free and open trade, with 99% of their agricultural products entering the U.S. market duty-free, while U.S. agricultural exports to Central America face an average tariff of 15-45%. With the approval of CAFTA-DR, U.S. producers will gain preferential access to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, as well as the Dominican Republic.

Failure of this agreement will result in increased competition from other countries in Central American markets. California producers will be placed at a further disadvantage as more countries, that produce the same crops as California farmers, gain better market access. CAFTA-DR's immediate elimination and phase-out of tariffs will mean California producers, who produce some of the highest quality food in the world, will be able to compete with producers in other exporting nations.

We are facing a critical time in trade negotiations. The passage of CAFTA-DR will send a positive signal to other trading partners around the world that the U.S. is serious about negotiating meaningful trade agreements that create fair export access opportunities for U.S. agricultural commodities.

California's producers of beef, fruits, nuts, vegetables, cotton, poultry, dairy products, wheat and rice stand to gain with CAFTA-DR and we encourage your support for passage in the 109th Congress. We appreciate your attention to this important matter, and please do not hesitate to contact any of the Coalition Members should you have any questions.